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ACTION AID-00

RELEASED IN PART
B6, B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

INFO	LOG-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	SRPP-00	EUR-00
	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NSAE-00
	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DRL-00	G-00
	SAS-00	/000W					

-----CAC06A 032137Z /62

O 031810Z DEC 03
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4044
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 004161

SENSITIVE

NSC FOR CHRIS BARTON
STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2013
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, OAS, VE
SUBJECT: AFTER THE REAFIRMAZO: NEXT STEPS

REF: CARACAS 4121

Classified By: Political Counselor Abelardo A. Arias for
Reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

Summary

1. (U) The Democratic Coordinating Committee announced on December 2 they had collected 3,602,051 signatures to petition a recall referendum against President Hugo Chavez. The pro-government coalition immediately denounced the numbers as grossly inflated, reasserting claims that the opposition had perpetrated a "mega-fraud" in its signature

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: APPEALS REVIEW PANEL
APPEAL ACTION: ORIGINAL DECISION UPHELD
REASON(S): B6, B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
DATE/CASE ID: 11 OCT 2007 200404746

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: MELVIN E SINN
DATE/CASE ID: 24 JUN 2005 200404746

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drive; GOV rhetoric moderated after OAS SecGen Gaviria's Dec. 2 meeting with Chavez. The opposition is preparing the signatures for presentation to the National Electoral Council (CNE), expected between December 5 and 10. The CNE will then have 30 days to verify the signatures and certify the results. End summary.

----- Opposition Announces 3.6 Million Signatures -----

2. (U) Miranda State Governor Enrique Mendoza, speaking on behalf of the Democratic Coordinating Committee (CD), announced December 2 they had collected 3,602,051 signatures calling for a recall vote against President Hugo Chavez. The opposition needed the signatures of 20 percent of the 12 million registered voters to force the recall vote, or about 2.4 million signatures. Mendoza noted the four-day collection had easily surpassed the constitutional requirement to convoke the presidential referendum. he claimed the number of signatures demonstrated the "majority will of Venezuelans."

----- GOV Claims "Mega-Fraud" -----

3. (U) The pro-government electoral campaign committee ("Comando Ayacucho") immediately denounced the numbers, reporting that its own calculations, based on table certifications, totaled only 953,967 signatures. Campaign manager Ismael Garcia reiterated claims that the opposition had perpetrated a "mega-fraud" during the collection by numerous acts of fraud and coercion. Fifth Republic Movement Deputy Willian Lara said they were compiling the reports of fraud and would soon present them to the CNE and criminal prosecutors. Lara added that they were convinced that the CNE would guarantee that "truth and the will of the Venezuelan people" would prevail.

----- Gaviria Accentuates the Positive -----

4. (U) OAS Secretary General Cesar Gaviria met with President Chavez on December 2, after the President complained publicly that Gaviria had only met with the opposition and that Gaviria had given the lie to Chavez's December 1 allegations of a "mega-fraud" by the opposition. Gaviria had earlier commented that the signature drive had been largely "normal,"

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and discounted the GOV allegations of massive fraud. President Chavez described to Gaviria the anomalies the GOV found in the opposition signature drive, according to the official news agency Venpres. Gaviria told reporters he was confident that both sides would respect whatever decisions emanated from the CNE regarding the fraud allegations.

Preparing for Delivery to the CNE

5. (SBU) Enrique Mendoza said the CD would deliver the signatures to the National Electoral Council (CNE) as soon as possible (We have been told dates ranging from Dec. 5 to Dec.

10).

they would first sort the signature forms, matching them up with the corresponding certifications filled out by CNE supervisors at the tables. then digitally scan every signature form and certification and make photocopies of them. The original forms and one copy will be packaged in envelopes of 100 for delivery to the CNE. the process would take 7 to 10 days.

6. (SBU) will also conduct a parallel validation process similar to that carried out by the CNE. will check signature data against the electoral registry, applying the same rules as the CNE. A European auditing firm will perform an independent audit. The signature check, will not delay delivery as they will be working from the digital image. When the signatures are ready, the CD will physically deliver them to CNE headquarters in downtown Caracas. Opposition representatives expect some resistance from Chavez supporters, who planned to disrupt the opposition delivery of signatures in August.

CNE Verification Process

7. (U) The CNE has 30 calendar days from the date of presentation to verify the signatures. The CNE announced it would perform simultaneous verification of the pro-government signature drive against opposition deputies, the opposition's drive against the President, and Accion Democratica's drive against pro-government deputies. There are four steps to the

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validation process:

-- Reception: CNE officials receive the boxes containing envelopes of no more than 100 signatures forms, in order by serial number. Eight forms are randomly drawn from each box and checked against their corresponding copies. The forms will be grouped by state.

-- Physical Verification: A second group of officials will check the forms for security features such as serial numbers, ultraviolet markings, font, fiber, etc.

-- Transcription: Transcriptionists (reportedly 240 computers are available in three shifts) will enter the data from the forms into a computer program. At the end of each shift, a supervisor will collate the reports of each transcriptionist, including a list of rejected signatures (see para 7).

-- Quality Control: This department will receive the list of rejected signatures and, in cases of illegible data, will perform a second check against the national identity cards archive.

----- Criteria for Validation -----

8. (U) CNE rules establish the following criteria for invalidating a signature:

-- If the first name, last name, date of birth, or identity number do not match those in the electoral registry.

-- If the signer is not registered in the electoral registry.

-- If the signature is printed.

-- If the signature page is a photocopy.

-- If it is determined that a person signed more than once (both signatures will be invalidated).

-- If there is no thumbprint or the thumbprint is not clearly imprinted within the space provided.

The entire signature form (containing up to 10 signatures) will be invalidated if:

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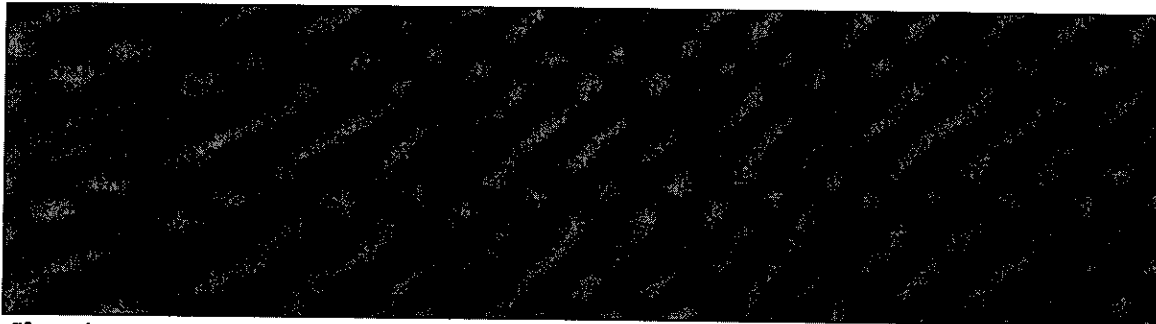
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- The header information is filled out incorrectly.
- The serial numbers are not found in the CNE database or the forms assigned to one petition drive were used in another.
- There are stray marks, alterations, or erasures on the forms.
- The form numbers are not properly recorded in the certification filled out at the collection point.

Time Periods for Verification

9. (U) The CNE has 30 days from the date of delivery to complete the verification process and certify the results of the signature drives. A final report will be issued at the end of the 30 days, which the CNE directors have two days to approve. Once the report is approved, CNE rules give 97 days to hold the corresponding referendum. The CNE will publish the identity card numbers associated with the signatures. Those who claim they did not sign a specific petition will have five days to submit a written complaint. (Note: The CNE has not yet clarified whether the complaint process will come before or after the 30-day period, but either way it is not expected to extend the stated timelines. End note.)

Comment



Shapiro

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